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STATEMENT OF PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL TO THE UN SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

The Question of East Timor

Mr. Chairman, Pax Christi International Catholic Peace Movement welcomes this opportunity to once again petition the Special Committee concerning East Timor. However, at the same time we regret that we must do so because the people of East Timor have not yet been able to freely exercise their right to self-determination. We view the 100,000 deaths (at the least estimate) in East Timor since its invasion by Indonesia in 1975 indicative of genocide. The people of East Timor continue to endure a war situation, a severe repression where their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms are gravely and daily violated. In the words of Bishop Filipe X. Belo, SDB, Apostolic Administrator of Dili: "We (the people of East Timor) are dying as a people and a nation."

We deplore the summary executions of East Timorese, arbitrary arrests and detentions, disappearance of many imprisoned, torture, forced sterilizations, resettlements and conscription into the Indonesian army. We decry the situation in which East Timorese are deprived of their fundamental freedoms, particularly those of speech, assembly and movement. Indeed we are mindful of the strong appeal which Pope John Paul II made for the protection of human rights in East Timor on the occasion of his October 12, 1989 visit to the territory: "Respect for the rights which render life more human must be ensured--the rights of individuals and the rights of families. I pray that those who have responsibility for life in East Timor will act with wisdom and goodwill towards all."

We are saddened that, according to Amnesty International, in conjunction with the Pope's visit at least twenty-five persons, most of them students, were detained for allegedly taking part in pro-independence demonstrations. Some were reported to have been ill-treated or tortured at the time of arrest and while in detention. We have word that as of December, 1989, at least ten of these persons remained in military detention centers.

We have also learned that last March four Lalerek-Mutin villagers were severely beaten and interrogated by Indonesian troops. Subsequently one of these villagers, Candido Amaral, was executed by a firing squad. (TAPOL, August 1990)

Mr. Chairman, Pax Christi International has repeatedly called on United Nations bodies to take action leading to the cessation of massacres in East Timor. We are grieved to learn of new massacres which have occurred since last April in several villages in the south-western districts of Ainaro and Bobonaro. (Australian Council for Overseas Aid)

We call for the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the sorely persecuted people of East Timor, an end to all Indonesian military operations in East Timor (A new operation began last March), the withdrawal of Indonesian populations sent to East Timor, the end of all resettlement programs for the East Timorese, the opening of the entire territory to humanitarian assistance organizations and international human rights organizations.

Pax Christi International makes its own the appeal of Bishop Belo which he expressed in his letter to the UN Secretary General on February 6, 1989. (UN Document A/AC.109/991, p.2, attached) Bishop Belo requested the UN Secretary General to conduct a referendum in East Timor under UN auspices. We view Bishop Belo's appeal, not as being motivated by personal or sectarian interests, but as embodying the wishes of the people of East Timor as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, as a follow-up to Bishop Belo's appeal, we urge the Special Committee to dispatch a visiting mission to East Timor to meet with Bishop Belo and other East Timorese leaders "to recommend to the General Assembly the most suitable steps to be taken to enable the population of this Territory to exercise their right to self-determination and independence." Resolution UNGA 44/101, Parag. 11 (d).

We call your attention to public campaign, now worldwide, in support of Bishop Belo's petition for a referendum in East Timor. This campaign follows the initiative of Bishop Aloisius N. Soma, President of the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace, begun last year in the Asia/Oceania region. To date, the campaign has received the signatures of some 270 members of the Catholic hierarchy, more than 100 Christian movements and organizations and more than 4,000 individuals, including clergy, religious and statespersons from 50 countries.

The Special Committee has received a report stating that the Catholic Church operates freely in East Timor. We have received information that contradicts this. No Catholic youth organizations are permitted in East Timor. Foreign priests presently missioned to East Timor have difficulties having their visas renewed. No foreign missionaries, unless they are Indonesian, may enter East Timor. The administration and faculty of San Jose School in Dili are experiencing pressures, inquiries and intimidations from the Indonesian authorities. East Timorese priests continue to be interrogated.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, we are gravely concerned about the personal safety of Bishop Belo. There is an urgent need to guarantee freedom of expression for the Catholic Church in East Timor and to end intimidation. Bishop Belo and the people of East Timor have a right to ask when will Article III of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights apply to them, namely the right to life, liberty and security. Be assured, Mr. Chairman, that Pax Christi International will continue its efforts on behalf of the people of East Timor so that they will exercise their right to self-determination and the other human rights which accrue from it.

Verbatim letter dated 6 February 1989 from the Apostolic Administrator of Dili Addressed to the UN Secretary-General

I take the liberty of writing you to let you know that the process of decolonization of Portuguese Timor has not yet been resolved by the United Nations, a fact that should not be forgotten. We, the people of Timor, believe that we should be consulted about the destiny of our homeland. That is why, as the one responsible for the Catholic Church, and as a citizen of Timor, I ask you through this letter to initiate in Timor a more normal and democratic process of decolonization that is achieved by means of a referendum. The people of Timor must be consulted about its future through a plebiscite. Up to now, the people have yet to be consulted. Others speak in the people's name: Indonesia declares that the people of Timor have already chosen integration, but the people of Timor have never said so; Portugal wishes that time will take care of this problem. Meanwhile, we are dying as a people and as a nation.

You are a democrat and a friend of human rights. Therefore, do demonstrate through deeds the respect for the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations which gives to all peoples on this planet the right to choose their own destiny in a free, conscientious and responsible manner.

There is not a more democratic way to ascertain the supreme will of the Timorese people than through a referendum promoted by the United Nations.

I thank you for all your sympathy for the people of Timor.

(Signed) Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, SDB
Titular Bishop of Lorium
Apostolic Administrator of Dili

* UN Document: A/AC.109/991 p.2